



## GAL EINAI

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B"H

Elul, the month of mercy, 5767

The upcoming year, the year 5768, is a *Shemittah* year. As the seventh year of a seven year cycle, the *Shemittah* year is observed as the Sabbatical year for the Land of Israel during which we are commanded to halt our agricultural use of the land.

Every week we observe the Shabbat, the seventh day of the seven day weekly cycle, during which we halt from the chores of the mundane and seek to elevate our lives with holiness, with prayer, and with the study of the Torah. Thus, when the Shabbat departs, we are able to imbue the coming days of the week with its sanctity and blessings.

Likewise, the Sabbatical *Shemittah* year can be seen, even by those individuals who are not farmers in the Land of Israel, as a chance to dedicate a year to spiritual elevation through the study of the Torah. At the end of the year, with our heightened sensitivity to the spiritual, we can all expect to return to our focus on the mundane with the intent of filling it with holiness.

Where should our spiritual endeavors and elevation for this upcoming year be focused?

To answer this question, let us turn to the *haftarah*—the reading in the Prophets—for the first day of *Rosh Hashanah*.<sup>i</sup> The reading describes the birth of the prophet Shmu'el (Samuel, in English pronunciation). Indeed the link between Shmu'el and *Rosh Hashanah* lies in the numerical equivalence between Shmu'el and the customary blessing we impart on one another on this day: *shanah tovah*, "a good year" (שְׁנָה טוֹבָה = שְׁמוּאֵל). The reading ends with the song of Channah, Shmu'el's mother, as she fulfills her vow and brings her son to be inaugurated into the work of the Temple, under Eli, the High Priest.

Later in the text,<sup>ii</sup> the Bible describes Shmu'el's first prophetic experience. Eli was resting on the side closer to the Holy of Holies, while Shmu'el was lying on the far side. Yet, "The word of God skipped over Eli and spoke with Shmu'el."<sup>iii</sup> Because of this, upon hearing his name being called, Shmu'el was certain that it was Eli who was calling him, and rushed to his master's side. But, Eli assured Shmu'el that he had not called him. This scene repeated itself three times, whereby Eli understood that it was the Almighty who was calling Shmu'el by prophecy. He instructed Shmu'el to lie in his place, and when he would hear the voice again, he was to reply "speak *Havayah*, for Your servant is listening."

It is customary to refer to the Hebrew year by its last 3 digits alone, in our case, 768. Indeed, the numerical value of the phrase "Speak *Havayah*, for Your servant is listening,"

in Hebrew (דְּבַר יְיָ כִּי שָׁמַע עֲבָדָךְ) is 768, alluding to the special focus of the upcoming year: prophecy.

Moreover, 768 itself is a multiple of 64, the *gematria* of the word “prophecy,” in Hebrew (נְבוּאָה):  $768 = 12 \cdot 64$ .

12 is the numerical value of the Hebrew word for “this” (זֶה) and alludes to the uniquely definitive prophetic ability of Moshe Rabbeinu, whom the sages note would prophesize with the phrase “this [exactly] is what God said...,” an ability that is described metaphorically as peering through a polished, clean windowpane.<sup>iv</sup>

There is a special connection between the prophet Shmu’el and Moshe Rabbeinu, the father of all prophets. The sages say that Shmu’el is comparable to both Moshe and his brother Aaron, together.<sup>v</sup> Indeed, in Shmu’el’s time, prophecy became as revealing and as clear as it had been in the time of Moshe, after having been long concealed, as the verse relates that until Shmu’el’s time, “the word of God was precious, there was no disclosed vision.”<sup>vi</sup>

The numerical value of “prophecy” (נְבוּאָה) is also equal to the value of the three holy Names that refer to the essence of the Almighty: יְיָ אֱלֹהֵי אֱהוּה, whose numerical values are: 26, 21, 17, respectively. These three Names are composed solely of the Hebrew vowel letters, אֵהוּי, and correspond, respectively to the three *sefirot*: wisdom (*chochmah*), understanding (*binah*), and knowledge (*da’at*). Altogether, these three holy Names have 12 letters, alluding again to the prophecy of Moshe. Also, each of these holy Names’ letters can be permuted in exactly 12 different ways (though each has four letters, the letter *hei* repeats twice in each, producing a total of  $\frac{4!}{2}$  unique permutations).

Thus, one should meditate on how a permutation of each of these three holy Names enlightens each of the 12 months of the year, in context with the special sense and tribal qualities that correspond to each month.

In the coming year, we should seek to fasten our consciousness on prophecy as it is revealed at its highest level and specifically with the unique hue of prophecy that will shine in each particular month.



Let us take a closer look at Shmu’el’s first prophetic experience. Eli instructed him to reply “Speak *Havayah*, for Your servant is listening.” But, in practice Shmu’el replied slightly differently. He said: “Speak, for Your servant is listening,” leaving out God’s essential Name, *Havayah*. The commentaries note that in spite of Eli’s clear identification of the voice as emanating from the Almighty, Shmu’el was fearful that another source was addressing him, be it an angel or perhaps even a demon.

As it turns out, the content of Shmu’el’s first prophecy was particularly harsh: “Behold, I am about to do something in Israel that will make the ears of everyone who hears of it tingle.” Had Shmu’el addressed God as *Havayah* (God’s name of essential mercy), he would have sweetened the harshness of the prophecy. Shmu’el hesitated and lacked the confidence necessary to accept that it was indeed God who was addressing him. Shmu’el’s own lifelong essential connection with the Almighty manifested through

the *sefirah* of eternity (*netzach*), as was revealed later when he addressed God as “the Eternal of Israel who will not waver nor change.”<sup>vii</sup> This connection was thus blemished. The *sefirah* of eternity empowers the psyche with a rectified experience of self-confidence, which in relation to prophecy (the *Zohar* explains that prophecy in itself is given through the *sefirah* of eternity) certifies that it is indeed God who is speaking and that it is not an angel or a demon misleading the prophet.

How could Shmu’el, who was at that time merely a child, have been expected to have such self-confidence?

Shmu’el had the privilege of receiving clear instructions from his own master, Eli, to trust that these were the words of God. But, more importantly, the sages say that God addressed Shmu’el using Eli’s voice.<sup>viii</sup> Indeed in *gematria*, the word “voice” (קוֹל = 136), equals the two words “*Havayah* Eli” (יְהוָה עֲלֵי = 136).

Continuing our comparison between Shmu’el and Moshe, the sages note that at the burning bush, Moshe’s first prophetic experience, God addressed Moshe using Amram’s (Moshe’s father) voice. When a prophet hears God speaking with his master’s voice, particularly when he has little experience, it is a sign of verity. Likewise, Chassidim feel that a dream in which their Rebbe appears can be trusted.

768 is also the sum of the numerical value of the words “crown” (כִּתְרוֹ) and “eternity” (נֶצַח), indicating that to strengthen our *sefirah* of eternity, the source of rectified confidence, we must draw down the light of our super-conscious *sefirah* of crown.

In this coming year, let us augment our resolve and rectified self-confidence. Let us each say “Speak *Havayah*, for you servant is listening.” Through the self-nullification inherent in the Sabbatical year of *Shemittah*, we shall all become vessels for prophecy and merit the fulfillment of the prophetic words describing the messianic era: “Your sons and daughters will prophesize.”<sup>ix</sup> Each of us will then be able to wholeheartedly say (in the words of the Lubavitcher Rebbe on *Hoshanah Rabbah* of 5752<sup>x</sup>): “May I myself be the subject of the verse [referring to the Mashiach], ‘The spirit of God will rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and fear of God,’”<sup>xi</sup> together with the true and complete redemption by the hands of our righteous Mashiach, now!

My blessings, that you be signed and sealed for a good and sweet year, in all things, material and spiritual, as one.

Yitzchak Ginsburgh

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<sup>i</sup>. 1 Samuel 1:1.

<sup>ii</sup>. Ibid. chapter 3.

<sup>iii</sup>. *Yalkut Shimoni Shmu’el* 97.

<sup>iv</sup>. *Yevamot* 49b.

<sup>v</sup>. *Berachot* 31b and *Shemot Rabbah* 16:3.

<sup>vi</sup>. 1 Samuel 3:1.

<sup>vii</sup>. 1 Samuel 15:29.

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viii. ???

ix. Joel 3:1.

x. As taken from the prayer we say upon opening the holy ark before the Torah reading on holidays.

xi. Isaiah 11:2.



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